

was on the roof of the carriage."

"On the roof?"

"Exactly. We could not explain the absence of a ticket. This would explain it. Everything fits together."

"We have quite a little round of afternoon calls to make," said he. "I think that Sir James Walter claims our first attention."

A butler answered our ring.

"Sir James, sir!" said he with solemn face. "Sir James died this morning."

"Perhaps you would care to step in, sir, and see his brother, Colonel Valentine."

"Yes, we had best do so."

We were ushered into a dim-lit drawing-room, where an instant later we were joined by a very tall, handsome, light-bearded man of fifty, the younger brother of the dead scientist. His wild eyes, stained cheeks and unkempt hair all spoke of the sudden blow which had fallen upon the household.

"It was this horrible scandal," said he. "My brother, Sir James, was a man of very sensitive honor, and he could not survive such an affair. It broke his heart. He was always so proud of the efficiency of his department, and this was a crushing blow."

"This is indeed an unexpected development," said my friend when we had regained the cab. "Now we shall turn to the Cadogan Wests."

A small but well-kept house in the outskirts of the town sheltered the bereaved mother. The old lady was too dazed with grief to be of any use to us, but at her side was a white-faced young lady, who introduced herself as Miss Violet Westbury, the fiancée of the dead man, and the last to see him on that fatal night.

"I can not explain it, Mr. Holmes," she said. "Arthur was the most single-minded, patriotic man upon earth. He would have cut his right hand off before he would sell a state secret confided to his keeping."

"No signs of any mental excitement."

"Yes," she said, at last. "I had a feeling that there was something on his mind."

"Now, tell us of that last evening."

"We were to go to the theater. The fog was so thick that a cab was useless. We walked and our way took us close to the office. Suddenly he darted away into the fog."

Holmes shook his head sadly.

Mr. Sidney Johnson, the senior clerk, met us at the office.

"It is bad, Mr. Holmes, very bad! Have you heard of the death of the Chief?"

"We have just come from his house."

"The place is disorganized. That West, of all men, should have done such a thing!"

"You are sure of his guilt, then?"

"I can see no other way out of it. And yet, I would have trusted him as I trust myself."

"Let us reconstruct, Watson," said Holmes, after half an hour of silence. "I am not aware that in all our joint researches we have ever had a case which was more difficult to get at. Every fresh advance which we make only reveals a fresh ridge beyond. And yet we have surely made some appreciable progress."

"Let us suppose, for example, that West had been approached by some foreign agent. It might have been done under such pledges as would have prevented him from speaking of it, and yet would have affected his thoughts in the direction indicated by his remarks to his fiancée. Very good. We will now suppose that as he went to the theater with the young lady he suddenly, in the fog, caught a glimpse of this same agent going in the direction of the office. He was an impetuous man, quick in his decisions. Everything gave way to his duty. He followed the man, reached the window, saw the abstraction of the documents, and pursued the thief."

"My instinct now is to work from the other end. If Mycroft has given us the list of addresses, we may be